

INFORMATION REPORT

CONFIDENTIAL

COUNTRY Hungary
SUBJECT Persecution of Hungarian Religious Orders

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1. After the special troops of the AVO entered the monasteries and convents at Szentgotthard, Zalaegerszeg, Nagykanizsa, Pécs, Baja and Szeged, monks and nuns were transferred and grouped together in the central section of Hungary. The number of monks who were evacuated and gathered together increased to 320 by 17 June 1950, and the number of nuns to 700.
2. The police action to concentrate the members of religious orders started along the Yugoslav frontier, and as of the end of June 1950 was spreading to more northern areas.
3. The concentration areas near Kunszentmiklos are at Jaszbereny and Vac. Monsignor Andrey, Prior of the Cistercian order, was allowed to visit the internees on 18 June. He found them in miserable condition, as the authorities had not arranged for provisions, and the internees had to rely on the food which the population of the nearby villages gave them.
4. The number of monks and nuns interned increased daily. The southwestern region, and the entire eastern region, especially the cities of Szombathely, Sopron, Pápa, and Kőszeg were under police control.
5. The bishops decided to negotiate with the state. A delegation of bishops had their first conference with the Minister of Culture, Darvas, on 20 June, a second on 6 July, and a third on 13 July. The bishops wished to discuss questions pertaining to the religious orders first, but the government avoided this under the pretext that the unrest had not yet terminated and that the political police had found proof which showed that the religious orders were "counter-revolutionary". Darvas cited as examples the Cistercian convent in Budapest (Moranszky ut) where an SS course of instruction was given, the discovery of arms in other convents, etc. It was evident that the government wished to present a fait accompli, and to carry out negotiations in this light.

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6. During the negotiations, interments continued in Budapest; Jesuits, Premonstratensians, Cistercians, and Benedictines were deported. The Hungarian government also used pressure on the bishops by another means. Towards the end of June, the Vicar General of the Esztergom Diocese, formerly Cardinal Mindszenty's diocese, died, and the canons wished to elect Charles Gikler to this position. The Communists learned of the intentions of the electors and Gikler was arrested the evening before elections. Several days later, the canons met to elect the auxiliary bishop, Zoltan Meszlenyi, as Vicar General. He, too, was arrested the day after his election, and is secretly confined somewhere. The Communists wished Nicolas Beresztoczy elected vicar. He had been condemned to a year in prison but had been free for the eight months preceding the elections. Since his liberation, the clergy and the Hungarian bishops have been very suspicious of Beresztoczy's attitude, and they issued an order stating that contact with him should be avoided as he probably had made an agreement with the police and was now working for them.

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8. [REDACTED] the bishop of Vac, Monsignor Jozsef Paterny, had been arrested; however, this is unconfirmed. The police considered him as one of the most hostile of the bishops and have placed many difficulties in his way for a long time. Therefore it is plausible that he has been arrested.

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